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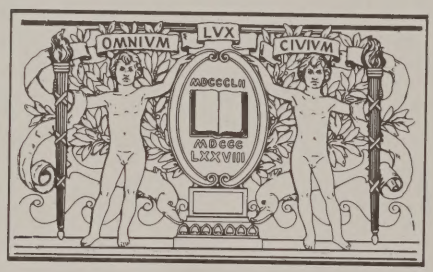

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A Profile Of

Boston's Spanish Speaking Community:

Characteristics and Attitudes

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PLANNING and EVALUATION
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INTRODUCTION

The following report, prepared by Elisabeth Youngerman, is a summary of the Boston Summer Migrant Project Survey. This survey was one part of a Title I summer project under the State Department of Education, conducted through APCROSS (Association Promoting the Constitutional Rights of the Spanish Speaking) under the direction of Mrs. Delia Vorhauer.

This report is offered as a beginning step toward filling the need for concrete data on Boston's Spanish-speaking population. The report opens with a description of the methodology of the survey itself, the geographic area covered, and the manner in which the interviews were conducted. The report covers the demographic characteristics of the families interviewed, in terms of such variables as age composition and family size, and describes their migration histories. The main body of the report centers on certain problem areas: housing, employment, health, education and social relations. In each of these areas, the Boston experience is detailed and discussed. The report ends with a brief run-down of the families' own perceptions of the good and bad elements of their lives in Boston.

It should be noted that, because of the relatively small number of families included in the survey and the fact that the families were not selected by any scientific sampling method, the findings of this report can hardly be considered definitive. However, the data generated by this survey are similar in broad outline to what people who are members of the Spanish-speaking community, and who work with it, feel are the characteristics and needs of the community.

Methodology

The survey was conducted from July 7 to August 31, 1968. It concentrated on the population in the South End, covering the city blocks bounded by Harrison Avenue and the railroad tracks to the East and West; and Waltham Street and Massachusetts Avenue from North to South.

This section of the South End was chosen as the result of a preliminary canvas which was conducted by the interviewers for a week before they actually began the main survey. The results of the canvas indicated that large pockets of Puerto Rican families were living in this area. The interviewers also contacted agencies, clinics, churches, and individuals in the South End for names of Spanish-speaking people to help determine the main concentrations of the population. By the end of the summer, the interviewers had gone into some sections of Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, and Roxbury as well.

The interviews were carried out by eight workers all of whom were from Boston's Spanish-speaking community, although they were not necessarily residents of the South End. The age of the interviewers ranged from nineteen to forty and most of them had little formal education--four of them were drop-outs from high school. All of them, however, were fluent in Spanish and all of the interviews were conducted and written up in Spanish. Training for the interviewers was on-the-job training.

ABCD contributed $1,000 to APCROSS to be used to reimburse the families who were interviewed at three dollars an interview. The interviews consisted of 65 questions and usually lasted one hour.

* * *

General Population Characteristics:

Out of the 263 households interviewed, all but two were migrants from Puerto Rico. Of these two, one was from Cuba, and one was from Colombia, South America. The great majority (198) of those interviewed were living in the South End. Three other Boston neighborhoods were also represented. In Roxbury, 35 households were interviewed; in Dorchester, 23; and in Jamaica Plain, 6.

The typical household interviewed was a family consisting of one or two parents with dependent children. However, many of the families had adult friends or relatives (60 people in all) living with them. A total of 1204 individuals were included in the households interviewed.

TABLE A

Type of Household

	No. of Households	% of Households
Family	217	82.5
Family and Additional Adults	46	17.5
TOTAL	263	100.0 %

The average household covered by the survey had between 4 and 5 members (the numerical average was 4.5 members). Relatively few (16.7%) of the households had only one or two members, while 31.7% had six or more members.

TABLE B

No. of Members	No. of Households	% of Households
1	12	4.5
2	32	12.2
3	51	19.4
4	47	17.9
5	28	10.6
6	33	12.5
7	25	9.5
8	18	6.8
9	15	5.7
TOTAL	263	100.0%

Of the 1204 people included in the survey, 721 were children--an average of 3.6 children per household.

One hundred and sixty-four of the households (including 16 bachelors) were headed by men. Ninety-nine were headed by women.

The median age of both the husbands and wives fell between 26 and 35 years. Sixty-five per cent of the husbands and 67% of the wives were less than 35 years of age.

Their children were young also--35% of the children were between 1 and 5 years old and over three-quarters of the children were under 12.

TABLE C

Age Composition of Household Members

Age	No. of People	% of People
Under one	36	3.0
1-5	257	21.3
6-12	275	22.8
13-17	157	13.0
18-25	168	14.0
26-35	166	13.8
36-45	77	6.4
46-65	60	5.0
66 and over	5	.4
No answer	3	.2
TOTAL	1204	100.0%

Migration:

The questionnaires did not offer adequate information for determining the time of migration to the United States. Of those families who responded to the question of place-of-origin, 55% had migrated from a small city (population of 25,000 or less) in Puerto Rico. Approximately one-fifth of the family heads had come from a larger city and a little over one-fifth of them had come from homes in the Puerto Rican countryside. Twenty families had migrated from Puerto Rico to Boston by way of another United States city.

TABLE D

Household Head's Place of Origin

Place of Origin	Number	Percent
Puerto Rico(small city)	143	54.4
Puerto Rico(large city)	51	19.4
Puerto Rico (countryside)	58	22.1
Cuba	1	.3
United States	1	.3
No Answer	9	3.5
TOTAL	263	100.0%

Most of the families appear to have moved frequently since coming to the United States. Almost 50% of the families had been living in their present quarters less than 6 months at the time of the interview. Over one-half of them had lived previously in another unit in the same neighborhood. Another one-fourth had come to their present dwellings from some other Boston neighborhood. Almost one-half (46%) were looking for another apartment at the time the survey was being conducted.

TABLE E

Last Place of Residence

	Number of Families	% of Families
Same Neighborhood	143	54.4
Other Boston Neighborhood	62	23.6
Other U.S. City	18	6.8
Puerto Rico	34	12.9
No Answer	6	2.3
TOTAL	263	100.0%

Housing:

The housing units that the households are currently occupying are small. One hundred and fifty (57%) of the 263 households in the survey are living in no more than 4 rooms. Only 9 of them had over 6 rooms.

Nine of the households owned the houses they lived in. Two of them lived with their parents and paid no rent. The rest of the households rented apartments.

TABLE F

Monthly Rent

	Number of Families	% of Families
Living with parents	2	.8
Owner	7	2.7
$20. - $30.	9	3.4
$31. - $45.	14	5.3
$46. - $65.	33	12.5
$66. - $85.	87	33.1
$86. - $105.	75	28.5
$106 - $125	27	10.3
$126 and over	4	1.5
No Answer	5	1.9
TOTAL	263	100.0%

One-third of the households (33%) said that their greatest problem since they had arrived in Boston concerned housing. In fact, 60% said they would prefer living in public housing to living in their present apartments.

Although one-fourth of the households said they could find nothing wrong with their apartments, the others had many complaints.

Many of them (25%) said that above all other housing problems, their houses were structurally unsound. Their housing had plumbing which did not work and poor heating. The buildings were in a general state of disrepair. Others (20%) stressed health problems as a result of poor housing. The neighborhoods were dirty; garbage was collected infrequently; the apartments had roaches and other insects. Some families (5%) blamed their landlords for these conditions. A few family heads (8%) said that their apartments were too small.

TABLE G

Most Serious Housing Problem

	Number of Households	% of Households
Space	22	8.4
Neighborhood	4	1.5
Health	52	19.8
Landlord	11	4.2
Structure	68	25.9
High Rent	11	4.2
Generally Bad	8	3.0
Nothing	75	32.6
No Answer	12	4.6
TOTAL	263	100.0%

Employment:

Fifty-nine percent of the male heads of household surveyed and 8% of the female heads were working. A majority of the males were working in factories. A few were working for wholesale businesses and a few in public administration. Eighty percent of these employed men were working in some kind of operative capacity. Only seven of the men (approximately 7%) were employed in a managerial or professional position.

TABLE H

Occupation of Male Heads of Household

	Number of Men	% of Men
Professional	5	3.0
Managerial	2	1.2
Sales	2	1.2
Foremen	1	.6
Operative	75	45.6
Service	6	4.3
Laborer	2	1.2
No Answer	71	43.3
TOTAL	164	100.0%

Fourteen percent of the men belonged to a union.

Most of the men had not been working in their present job for very long. Almost 60% had been working in that job for less than one year. Only 1% had held the same job for over 3 years.

Nine of the household heads earned a weekly salary of more than $115; seven earned less than $65. The average salary of the working male head of household was close to $86.00 a week.

TABLE I

Salaries of Working Male Heads of Household

Salary Range	No. of Men	% of Men
Below $65.	7	7.1
$66. - $85.	35	35.7
$86. - $95.	16	16.3
$96. - $105.	9	9.1
$106. - $115.	2	2.0
$116. - $125.	7	7.1
$126. - $150.	2	2.0
$151. and over	2	2.0
No Answer	18	18.3
TOTAL	98	100.0%

Two hundred and seventeen of the 246 female heads who responded to the questionnaire stayed at home during the day. Of the twenty women working, 16 were employed in an operative position. Among these working women, the average salary was close to $86 a week.

Many (48%) of the women who were not working said that they would be interested in doing so. Twenty-five percent said, "no" they did not want to work and twelve percent said they could not take a job because they had to care for their children during the day.

Almost 60% of the women said they would be interested in some kind of training classes to prepare them for a job. Most of them said they had no skills. Those who did mentioned sewing, cooking and driving a car.

One hundred and ten female heads of households said they were receiving some kind of welfare payment. Forty-three of the fathers were receiving some kind of assistance payments.

When asked where they would go to look for a new job, 50% of the families said they did not know. Twenty-five percent answered "Centro de Accion".

Health:

One hundred and twenty-six of the households in the survey had a member who had received treatment for an illness since they arrived in Boston. Most of the problems were internal (14.8%). Some (4.6%) were respiratory or connected with hearing or vision (5.3%). Seven percent of the doctor visits were related to mental or emotional problems.

TABLE J

Health Problems

	Number of Households	% of Households
Internal	39	14.8
Respiratory	12	4.6
Hearing & Vision	14	5.3
Bones	9	3.4
Dental	5	1.0
Nerves	19	7.2
Other	9	3.4
Combination of Above	21	9.0
Nothing	125	47.5
No Answer	10	3.8
TOTAL	263	100.0%

The Puerto Rican households relied on neighborhood facilities to meet their health needs. Fifty-seven percent of the parents went to Boston City Hospital for medical advice and over 75% took their children to City Hospital for attention. Few of the households went to private doctors for consultation, and only six percent said specifically that they went to see a Spanish-speaking doctor.

TABLE K

Most Recently Used Medical Facility

	Number of Households	% of Households
Boston City Hospital	123	46.8
Boston University Hospital	3	1.1
Other hospital	32	12.2
Private Doctor, Sp.spkg.	12	4.6
Private Doctor, Eng. spkg.	13	4.9
No Visit	26	9.9
No Answer	54	20.5
TOTAL	263	100.0%

In addition to language problems at school, families mentioned difficulties in conjunction with their health services. They felt there was a definite need for Spanish-speaking personnel in the neighborhood clinics and at the hospitals.

Religion:

Two hundred and sixteen ofthe 263 families (82%) were Catholic. Twenty-four (9%) of them were Pentecostal and 11 (4.2%) of them said they were Protestant. Nine of the families said they had no religious affiliation.

Education:

Practically all of the adults who had been to school received their education in Spanish, in Puerto Rico. Ninety-four percent of the women and 87% of the men had been educated in Puerto Rico.

Thirty-five of the women had not been to school at all; and over one-half of them had between one and seven years of schooling.

Eighteen of the men had never been to school and 113 of the 164 men had less than seven years of school. Only 3 of the men had completed high school and done additional course-work following graduation.

TABLE L

Years of School - Male Adults

	Number of Male Adults	% of Male Adults
No School	19	11.1
First Grade	4	2.3
Grade 2-4	58	33.9
Grade 5-7	37	21.6
Grade 8-10	27	15.8
Grade 11-12	14	8.2
Over Grade 12	4	2.3
No Answer	8	4.7
TOTAL	171	100.0%

TABLE M

Years of School - Female Adults

	Number of Female Adults	% of Female Adults
No School	39	14.6
First Grade	12	4.5
Grade 2-4	63	23.6
Grade 5-7	71	26.6
Grade 8-10	36	13.5
Grade 11-12	27	10.1
Over Grade 12	1	.4
No Answer	18	6.7
TOTAL	267	100.0%

The parents were asked their opinions about schools in the United States. To the question, "What do you think is most necessary to improve the schools?", the most frequent response was "bilingual teachers."

TABLE N

Most Important School Need

	Number of Households	% of Households
Don't Know	64	24.3
Discipline	12	4.6
Bilingual	64	24.3
General Imp.	21	7.9
More Teachers	18	6.8
More Schools	6	2.3
Better Facilities	7	2.7
No Answer	71	26.9
TOTAL	263	100.0%

The fact that many parents wanted more bilingual teachers for their schools was re-emphasized later when parents said that some of their children were having language problems in school. Only a little over one-third (37%) of the children over five years of age said they could read and speak English.

One-third of the male heads of household said they were able to read and speak English. Over one-half (52%) said they were not able to do so. Over fifty (20%) of the mothers said they were able to read and speak English.

At home, most of the Puerto Rican families spoke Spanish when they were together. Two hundred and thirteen of the 263 families spoke only Spanish. Thirty-seven of them were bilingual and of these, only 13 spoke English more often than Spanish. Only one family spoke English exclusively at home.

TABLE O

Language Spoken at Home

	Number of Households	% of Households
Spanish Only	213	81.0
English Only	1	.3
More Spanish than English	17	6.5
More English than Spanish	13	4.9
English & Spanish equally	7	2.6
No Answer	12	4.6
TOTAL	263	100.0%

Social Relations:

Only twelve of the 263 families had been involved at one time with the police. Most (92%) of the families had never used the services of a lawyer. Those families who had done so needed legal advice to file papers for divorce or for unemployment or disability compensation.

Only sixteen of the families said they belonged to a social club ---- most of these were members of "Puro Afro."

Thirty-two (12%) of the families were registered voters.

The Good Things & The Bad Things:

In the final questions of the survey, the families were asked to describe the good things they found in their neighborhood. Thirty-five percent of the families said "nothing." The other answers were ranked this way:

Peacefulness (most)
Schools
Neighbors
Parks
Clinics

Families were also asked to state their most pressing problem. Ranked in a similar order from highest to lowest, according to numbers of families who chose each category, these problems are as follows:

Housing
Health
Low Incomes
Nothing
Bills (paying them on time)
Employment (getting a job)
Children